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European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA)

80th Joint Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents and Directors of Specialised Centres

Meeting Report

6-7 November 2023
Room G04, Agora Building

*Document prepared by the Secretariat
of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement*

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Monday, 6 November 2023

WELCOME ADDRESS

Krzysztof Zyman, Executive Secretary of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) welcomed the participants to the 80th Joint Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents (CPC) and the Directors of Specialised Centres. Present at the meeting were the permanent correspondents of Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Malta, North Macedonia, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovak Republic and Ukraine. Representatives of the Permanent Representations of Luxembourg (D. Siry) and Moldova (A. Ursu) were also present. The permanent correspondents for Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Luxembourg had apologised for their absence due to other commitments.

1. ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA [AP/CAT\(2023\)OJ05](#)

The draft agenda was adopted as proposed.

2. STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

K. Zyman welcomed the participants to the meeting. The Chair, M. Mala (PC, Cyprus), also welcomed the participants and looked forward to a fruitful exchange.

A. Micallef, (PC, Malta) stressed the importance of maintaining contacts with the specialised centres in the non-member states and to continue collaboration with these centres. K. Zyman agreed to this.

3. PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES 2023

3.1 Statutory meetings

K. Zyman referred the participants to the reports on the Bureau meetings held on 21 March, 5 July and 13 September and the Committee of Permanent Correspondents (CPC) meeting held on 11 May. The Bureau reports [AP/CAT\(2023\)01](#), [AP/CAT\(2023\)04](#), [AP/CAT\(2023\)05](#) and the CPC meeting report [AP/CAT\(2023\)03](#) had been circulated in advance.

K. Zyman recalled the main decisions of the last CPC meeting. The list of EUR-OPA specialised centres was updated, notably, with the addition of the newly established Specialized Centre For Technological Hazards (SCenT), Slovak Republic, to the network. Further, C. Rizza had presented a working paper on "*The use of social media, traditional media, big data and mobile phone networks, to support national measures for successful disaster risk communication*". To this end, the draft "*Guidelines for the use of digital tools such as social media and mobile apps for successful disaster risk communication*" is based on her working paper. The committee would be invited to bring this work to a close as it will decide on adopting the guidelines and the follow up on this topic.

The CPC bureau membership was up for renewal and elections would be held at this 80th meeting. The Sub-Committee to Evaluate the Project Proposals and the allocation of funds to the centres was currently composed of A. Micallef (PC, Malta) and N. Holcinger (PC, Croatia) and the Executive Secretary. The membership of the sub-committee was also up for renewal.

The EUR-OPA secretariat remains unchanged, with only K. Zyman and C. Emezie. As pointed out during the exchange with Simon Moutquin (PACE member, Belgium) on the Parliamentary Assembly report on "*Political strategies to prevent, prepare for, and face the consequences of natural disasters*", EUR-OPA's diminishing resources, compounded by inflation makes its position more challenging. The situation is paradoxical as the individual countries, members of the Agreement, had seen their contributions significantly increase in 2023.

M. Mala thanked K. Zyman and stressed the importance of promoting the Agreement and establishing cooperation.

4. THE REYKJAVIK SUMMIT OF THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE EUR-OPA MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT. THE DECLARATION "[UNITED AROUND OUR VALUES](#)"

K. Zyman reflected on the Council of Europe's role in the changing European political landscape. The Reykjavik Declaration was adopted and resulted in the creation of a new Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. An overwhelming majority (39) of the Council of Europe member States and 4 States (including three Non-Member States) as well as the European Union have joined the Agreement which is in the process of being set up in The Hague. Additionally, the Council of Europe is currently discussing and preparing to draft a framework convention on Artificial Intelligence (AI).

In the field of environment, wherever conventions are open to ratification by Non-Member States, the Council will seek to encourage further accessions and will seek closer cooperation and implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, whilst avoiding duplication. This concerns the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, ratified by 50 countries among which are four African countries. Importantly for EUR-OPA, Appendix V of the Declaration sets out to identify the unique challenges the triple planetary crisis - pollution, loss of biodiversity and climate change – pose to human rights. The Council aims to facilitate the participation of youth in such discussions as well as contribute to developing common responses to the problem through strengthening activities related to the environment.

The PACE report prepared by S. Moutquin has been presented to the Committee of Ministers, who are in turn preparing a response for the Parliamentary Assembly. The report lists the relevant work undertaken by EUR-OPA and states that the Council is responding to the urgent environmental needs through its Reykjavik process. The report is up for adoption at the end of November and subsequently will be made available to the public.

It is planned that from January 2024, EUR-OPA, the Bern Convention and the Landscape Convention will become part of the Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law.

In reply to a question by V. Poiarkov, K. Zyman clarified that EUR-OPA's budget remains autonomous and only funds the Agreement's activities.). S. Karma (ECFF, Greece)

mentioned the positive step by the Council to set up a new Directorate for the Environment as it impacts many aspects of human lives. EUR-OPA could highlight issues of interactions between human beings and the environment. A. Micallef also commended the opportunities cooperation in the new Directorate General would present. T. Chelidze added that EUR-OPA could look into new ways of accessing hidden (risk) data.

5. BUDGETARY SITUATION [AP/CAT\(2023\)06](#)

K. Zyman explained EUR-OPA's budgetary situation. A. Ursu (Moldova Permanent Representation) asked if EUR-OPA was discussing accession with other countries. K. Zyman explained that the discussions were informal e.g., with Mexico. The conclusions of the last EUR-OPA ministerial meeting held in Mathosinhos in 2021 were presented to the GR-C in March 2022. K. Zyman stressed that the political support of the permanent correspondents and the Agreement's member states needed to be reinforced in order to encourage other states to join.

6. PRIORITIES OF THE AGREEMENT [AP/CAT\(2021\)11](#)

6.1. Discussion on the Agreement's priorities, including proposals from Prof. Viktor Poiarkov (Permanent Correspondent, Ukraine)

EUR-OPA will continue to prioritise implementing the activities outlined in the Medium-Term Plan. K. Zyman reminded the CPC the priority areas of work they deemed to be of particular interest. As an example, EUR-OPA could prioritise the protection of cultural heritage sites, in particular building on current work on assessment and retrofitting of masonry in historic edifices, in a way that does not duplicate work already being carried out by other international organisations. Intergovernmental cooperation to address threats posed by climate crisis could be promoted by developing methodologies and risk assessment tools.

A. Micallef added that the Agreement should actively seek to move from internal research on various topics (social media, climate crisis, cultural heritage etc) towards outreach projects in a bid to showcase its "products". BeSafeNet is a good example of an outreach to secondary schools across the member states. This could be one of the goals of the Agreement's priorities in partnership with the specialised centres in 2024. At the intergovernmental level, the Agreement could focus on addressing human rights and future generations, as well as persons with special needs (in a wider sense) in times of disasters. Lessons could be drawn from the [2021 Recommendation on enabling and protecting persons with disabilities](#).

M. Mala illustrated that cultural heritage is a definition that encompasses the whole of society, including tangible and intangible heritage including for example their traditions. By way of demonstration, she pointed out that after a forest fire the destruction is wide ranging and impacts flora and fauna, as well as buildings, landscapes and the general environment. When referring to disabilities, the scope could also be widened to include people in need or in difficult situations, for example in the context of migration, which is an issue compounded by the wider conflicts.

K. Zyman added that under the planned move to the Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law, the overall aim will be to implement decisions implementing the Reykjavik

declaration.. In this context, EUR-OPA could address the human rights of future generations. A. Micallef pointed out it was not necessary for directors themselves to have human rights experience, as such expertise certainly existed in the member countries. It was agreed that this action would help the Agreement to move in the right direction.

Decision: In 2024, the Agreement will focus on the Promoting the right to living in a clean, healthy and sustainable environment for the current and future generations.

Following the general debate on the future work priorities of the Agreement, V. Poiarkov (PC, Ukraine) presented his proposals for future work in Ukraine. Following the presentation, K. Zyman laid out the possibility of developing a project that could be proposed for funding through the Action Plan for Ukraine, which is a general source of funds allocated for viable projects in Ukraine. The project proposal would have to be accepted as part of the action plan. It would necessitate the involvement and support of the Permanent Representation of Ukraine who would need to provide necessary backing for such a project. If accepted, the project would be implemented by the EUR-OPA secretariat, in collaboration with scientific centres possessing necessary expertise and other international organisations. If successfully implemented, such a project would significantly raise visibility for the Agreement and could be supported by other countries without asking for them to formally join the Agreement. [Link to Presentation](#)

Decision: The Agreement will work with the Permanent Representation of Ukraine to develop a project with a view to proposing it for inclusion into the Action Plan for Ukraine.

7. PRESENTATION OF CANDIDATES FOR ELECTION TO THE CPC BUREAU AND ITS SUBORDINATE BODIES (SUB-COMMITTEE TO EVALUATE THE PROJECT PROPOSALS AND GENDER RAPPORTEUR) [AP/CAT\(2022\)08rev](#)

K. Zyman invited the permanent correspondents to present themselves for election into the Bureau of the CPC and the Sub-Committee to Evaluate the Project Proposals. The quorum had been met and the elections would go ahead as planned. Each mandate would run for two years.

8. PRESENTATION OF THE DRAFT "GUIDELINES ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA, TRADITIONAL MEDIA, BIG DATA AND MOBILE PHONE NETWORKS, TO SUPPORT NATIONAL MEASURES FOR SUCCESSFUL DISASTER RISK COMMUNICATION" [Draft Guidelines](#) [AP/CAT\(2023\)01REC](#)

Dr Caroline Rizza, Associate Professor, Information Systems for Crisis Response and Management (ISCRAM), Brussels, briefly recapped on the topic prior to presenting the draft guidelines and its purpose. The authors of the draft guidelines, C. Rizza and O. Galichet focused on the theoretical and practical aspects of using social media in the context of disaster risk communication. Both working papers presented at the CPC meeting in May by C. Rizza and F. Duarte, provided the basis for the guidelines. The document specifically

addresses the question of rumour and misinformation on social media and rebuilding trust between the citizens and governmental institutions, which remains a major challenge. The guidelines propose including social media tools in the case of major events and preparing the citizens to effectively use these tools during disasters with the aim of consolidating citizen-led initiatives and achieving a more horizontal perspective. C. Rizza highlighted the importance for institutions to adapt to a new digital culture brought about by social media, given its varied uses (information gathering, publishing, self-expression, communication, crowd sourcing and funding etc.) and significant number of users. Statistics show that in 2019 over 5.7 billion users connected to Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. However, there should be clear interaction and collaboration between state and civil actors during a crisis. It is also possible to follow discussions as they are created and shared on social media.

In spite of its popularity, challenges remain when using social media. These include technical, ethical and organisational challenges. These challenges can hinder the practical integration of these digital tools and collaboration with civil society.

The guidelines underlines the importance of engaging the whole population to embrace digital opportunities and ensuring that information is relevant and timely with regard to the damage, the number of casualties and the state of rescue operations. This ensures the cycle of preparedness, response, recovery and prevention in disaster risk reduction. The draft recommendation was formulated following the same logic, key message and actions as detailed in the guidelines. [Link to presentation](#)

Dr Felipe Pathe Duarte, Assistant Professor and researcher at the NOVA School of Law and Instituto Superior de Ciências Policiais e Segurança Interna (ISCPSI), Lisbon, Portugal (online) reflected on how social platforms could be weaponised during extreme events. Information disorder could change the decision-making process in order to achieve social and political disorder. Studies showed that it was possible to subvert political, geopolitical and security dynamics through information disorder. As climate change increases the occurrence of natural disasters, it potentially heightens disaster miscommunication against communities at their most vulnerable time. Another factor could be foreign influence in misinformation during crises to create division, change the institutional order, although this is difficult to prove. It is necessary to build trust between the communities and the decision-makers. In the case of online threats, these are usually dealt with by the security or intelligence services. It is impossible to police social media as it could infringe on fundamental human rights of freedom of expression. Reference was made to the dangers of AI in the information disorder campaigns.

Olivier Galichet, expert in planning/crisis management at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Officiers de Sapeurs-Pompiers in Paris, participated online. He noted that there had not been misinformation or fake news organised to purposefully destabilise the rescue teams. As with cyber-attacks, rescue services were not the prime targets. National operational centres for civil security in France have worked with Social Media for Emergency Management (SMEM) for the last 10 years. However, it takes time to change existing standard operating procedures, as well as cultural perceptions and habits. For the last 20 years, it has proven difficult for French institutions to convince citizens to become actors for their own security and the response has not been as good as expected. Climate change compounds this problem with the increased number of longer lasting crises often with greater impact. SMEM allows rescue services and the government to connect with citizens in a way that facilitates citizens' participation in crisis management. As underlined by

F. Duarte, this approach should be applied cautiously, although its use is nonetheless inevitable.

Improvements had been made e.g., earthquake applications are better known and now include aggregating information from X and WhatsApp depending on the localisation. The expertise has been built over the years with improved accuracy to correctly interpret the negatives and positives. But it was questioned if the general public were aware of the existence of/ or downloaded the specific applications as they are non-mainstream tools.

N. Holcinger explained how three applications were used during the earthquake and Covid-19 pandemic in Croatia. Croatia is now working on an application that would send information to all its citizens in an emergency without them having to download the applications. G. Silvestrini stressed the lack of education and public awareness, highlighting the importance of studying how information is spread. In Ravello and Naples for example, local people confirmed their awareness of events and risks, but their opinions were overlooked or not even sought before major events. Therefore, institutions could capitalise on local people's information knowledge and the media too. EUR-OPA could take the initiative to further develop projects aiming to inform the general public about social media use in disasters. G. Silvestrini recommended to join forces with UN and EU on the topic of use of social media in DRR.

Decision: the recommendation and the guidelines were unanimously adopted.

9. SYNERGIES ON CLIMATE CHANGE: COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE BERN CONVENTION, THE LANDSCAPE CONVENTION AND EUR-OPA

G. Silvestrini cited the Culture, Nature and Heritage Division's funding limitations and the consequential staff and budgets cuts over the last 15 years (ca 82%). However, at the recent Reykjavik Summit, there was a political commitment to greatly invest in environmental issues. Although concrete proposals have yet to be tabled, the Secretary General has pledged additional funding for the Bern Convention budget and for climate change mitigation measures. A final decision on the budgets will be made before the end of November. Efforts will be made to create synergies between the Landscape, Health, Biodiversity Divisions as well as EUR-OPA.

Tuesday 7 November 2023

10. ELECTION OF THE BUREAU OF THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT CORRESPONDENTS

Elections for the Bureau were held. D. Reynolds (PC, Slovak Republic) was elected Chair of the Committee. A. Micallef (PC, Malta) and A. Balducci (PC San Marino) will both remain Vice-Chairs and members of the Bureau. As no candidates stood for election to the subordinate bodies, A. Micallef and N. Holcinger will remain on the Sub-Committee to

Evaluate the Project Proposals. J. Isgandarli (PC, Azerbaijan) will continue in his role as Gender Rapporteur.

11. PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES 2023

The Directors of Specialised Centres present the project achievements for 2023 and the project proposals for 2024 (8 minutes maximum)

European Center for Disaster Awareness (BeSafeNet), Cyprus

D. Christou introduced BeSafeNet aims and activities in 2023. BeSafeNet serves as an interactive tool for awareness raising and educating secondary school pupils about disaster risk reduction through its dedicated [website](#). Ten countries participated in the 2023 Olympiad with the teams from Romania, Greece and Bulgaria earning the top three positions. Overall, 1390 students participated in the competition, as the project continues to increase in popularity. The Editorial Board also released a new booklet summarising the BeSafeNet's objectives. The European Centre on Prevention and Forecasting of Earthquakes (ECPFE, Greece) prepared the cultural heritage topic, which has now been added under the new "Vulnerability" section. A. Micallef will also continue to develop the climate crisis topic for the website.

In 2024, BeSafeNet will translate the "Landscape fires" section into German, in collaboration with the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC). Promotion of the Olympiad will continue in the member states and the next competition is scheduled for 23 February 2024. Cooperation will continue with the European Center for Forest Fires (ECFF) and ECPFE on the inclusion of people with disabilities in disaster prevention and rescue efforts. BeSafeNet plans to set up a scientific committee to scrutinise, advise and provide a variety of expertise. BeSafeNet will also look into the possibility of acquiring software for text-to-speech, screen readers and magnifiers to make the website accessible to people with corresponding disabilities. [Link to presentation](#)

Geodynamical Hazards of High Dams (GHHD), Georgia

T. Chelidze presented GHHD's 2023 activities which focused on the development of new methods of analysis of strains/seismicity in the area of large dams, using machine learning tools. The activities included continuation of measures of tilts in the main section of the Enguri Dam area. The Centre also prepared a review paper on new methods of analysis of dam stability and participated in the international project DAMAST (Dams and Induced Seismicity): Monitoring for High Dam Lifetime - Reliable supply of water and electricity in times of decarbonization. The aim of this project is to ensure the supply of clean, reliable and affordable power as well as help the management of freshwater. [Link to presentation](#)

Vulnerability of Industrial and Lifelines Systems (ECILS), North Macedonia

V. Shendova presented ECILS 2023 activities. ECILS undertook two projects in 2023 in cooperation with ECPFE, Greece on seismic vulnerability assessment of the Skopje Old Bazaar and seismic assessment and retrofitting of masonry preserved structures. The overall aim of both projects is to use scientific and technical knowledge to better assess

any evolving risks in order to adapt the resilience strategies as well as familiarisation of pre-earthquake building assessment methodologies developed in Greece and North Macedonia. Technical visits were carried out in the historic cities of Bitola and Ohrid in July and in Nafplio in September. A seminar was held on 13 September in Athens on the new Greek Code for the assessment of masonry buildings (KADET).

In 2024, meetings and interviews are planned with the local authorities and with owners of buildings in the old towns of Skopje, Bitola and Ohrid. Further, ECILS will attend the 18th World Conference on Earthquake Engineering in Milan in June 2024. Cooperation with ECPFE will continue, through which ECILS will aim to improve its experience in practicing Eurocodes in North Macedonia. [Link to presentation](#)

K. Zyman added that information and expertise sharing and mutual cooperation are exactly the reason behind the creation of the EUR-OPA Network of Specialised Centres. He encouraged other centres to share their expertise with their counterparts and respective administrative authorities. Short videos were particularly an effective means of highlighting the Agreement's work and it was important to disseminate past work (publications, videos) in order to increase visibility.

European Centre on Prevention and Forecasting of Earthquakes (ECPFE), Greece

L. Pelli presented ECPFE's 2023 activities. In addition to collaborating with ECILS in North Macedonia, ECPFE also teamed up with the European Center for Buildings Rehabilitation (ECBR), Romania, on a project focusing on the resilience of buildings and the needs of persons with special vulnerabilities during earthquakes. ECPFE produced a video with subtitles and international sign language showing how to protect one's self during an earthquake.

In 2024, ECPFE will partner with several specialised centres on a project assessing the seismic behaviour and pathology of various Byzantine churches in the Balkan regions. In the second phase, ECPFE will produce a pre-earthquake assessment data sheet and subsequently a questionnaire. ECPFE will continue its collaboration with BeSafeNet and prepare new material, multiple choice questions and a glossary on people with disabilities and caregivers for the website. ECPFE also aims to produce guidelines for self-protection in case of an earthquake specifically for people with blindness impairment, with the aid of Optical Character Recognition (OCR). [Link to presentation](#)

European Center for Forest Fires (ECFF), Greece

S. Karma shared highlights from ECFF's 2023 activities. In a bid to promote inclusive action of citizens, an evacuation exercise was conducted in October in partnership with the Ministry of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection, the Hellenic Fire Brigade and other partners. It included presenting guiding techniques for persons with visual disabilities and served to highlight the importance of participation of persons with disabilities, preparing building evacuation plans and enhancing the awareness of caregivers and assistants. Visually impaired persons participated in the exercise. Among lessons learned was the need to invest in DRR design as a strategy and to regularly test evacuation plans with all communities. ECFF also partnered with CERU on the Population Involvement on Risk Management and Mitigation project (POPIRiM).

S. Karma was invited by the UNDRR Making Cities Resilient (MCR2030) initiative to participate as ECFF representative to the Knowledge Product with the title "Flames of change: innovating heat and wildfire governance for inclusive communities". This knowledge product will focus on innovative and inclusive heat and wildfire governance with an aim to equip policy makers and other stakeholders with necessary knowledge, solutions and tools in tackling this critical issue of reducing the risk of heat, drought and wildfires, while leaving no one behind. The report will contribute to the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction (EFDRR) Roadmap 2021-2030 implementation and support stakeholders of the EFDRR Action-Oriented Dialogue on Heat and Wildfire Governance in implementing the dialogue's conclusions.

In 2024, ECFF will focus on producing accessible informative videos, e.g. on emergency evacuation planning for persons with disabilities. The translation of the videos will be in English and the International sign language. [Link to presentation](#)

Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Insular Coastal Dynamics (ICoD), Malta

J. Mamo explained the context in which ICoD carried out its activities in 2023. Malta has struggled with drought and October was designated as the driest month in 101 years. In September, Storm "Daniel" hit several countries such as Spain, Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria and Libya, etc. Therefore, ICoD's activities centred on examining the evaporation and infiltration processes in rural and urban areas – the quantity of the precipitation that infiltrated into the ground, its quality, which adaptation measures to apply etc. ICoD integrated the data already available within the Copernicus Emergency Management Service.

In 2024, ICoD will undertake a project on "Social media as a new democratic space" using the Guidelines on social media with respect to flood risk. During storms in Malta, there is overflowing information on social media (pictures, commentary, videos). Links between applications and social media are not always clear. Many comments on the flooding were posted on Instagram. ICoD will aim to input expert models and predictions together with guidelines for standardisation into web based social media systems and transfer information onto social media as comments. In this way, the impact of risk with expert knowledge is directly linked in the social media space where people are engaging. ICoD will collaborate on the project with two government agencies in Malta.

K. Zyman applauded ICoD's proposal and looked forward to its further development. D. Christou asked how fake news would be identified and managed in this model. J. Mamo explained that through the routing of data, fake news could be avoided as the information will be validated through the inclusion of videos and photos at different points (live) by different scientifically trained contributors. [Link to presentation](#)

European Centre for Disaster Medicine (CEMEC), San Marino

As part of CEMEC's 2023 activities, R. Mugavero developed two pillars: a Centre for Disasters Forensic and Biometric Sciences and Optimizing Health Care for enhancing organizational operations through its traineeship programme for non-health/non-medical responders, equipping them to assist in emergencies. This was a joint internship programme carried out through the IBF foundation. Through networking, CEMEC founded the European Chapter of the World Association for Disaster and Emergency Medicine (WADEM). A wide selection of courses are available in clinical medicine, maxi-emergencies

and disaster management, public health and geological area. Advance courses offered include CBRNe disaster and incident risk management. CEMEC collaborates with international organisations such as WHO, Directorate for Civil Defence, Ministry of the Interior, Turkey and the Croatian Directorate for Civil Protection. CEMEC also organised and participated in several international conferences and workshops. In addition, CEMEC organised training for teachers, students and youth on the World Heart Day on 29 September. For example, high school seniors were taught basic life support and defibrillation. Cross-border civil defence exercises were held with the Italian and Croatian governments respectively, focusing on how to deal with maxi-emergencies and radiological and technological hazards. Regarding social media, CEMEC created LinkedIn and Instagram pages in order to attract younger audiences.

In conclusion, R. Mugavero stressed the importance of collaboration e.g., through the creation of a summer school where experts/centres can share their experience and increase networking in order to raise the visibility of the Agreement. K. Zyman added that the available technological hazards expertise could be harnessed in putting together a proposal for the Ukraine project, as EUR-OPA enjoys a unique position with an established and tested network built on the Council of Europe's solid foundation. The role of the network could also include acting as a focal point to share news of activities in the various fields of disaster. EUR-OPA could also seek expertise beyond the network, in the member states. [Link to presentation](#)

Centro Universitario Europeo per i Beni Culturali (CUEBC), Italy

F. Ferrigni presented CUEBC's 2023 activities. Guidelines for the editing of a hazards map of the local areas were produced under the Schools Against Domestic and Urban Disasters (SADUR). Activities under the Population Involvement on Risk Management and Mitigation (POPIRIM) project aimed to include schools and the local population in reducing the dimension of urban risks through their participation. It focused on exploiting the existing resource of local knowledge which is rarely done so that local knowledge is taken into consideration before events occur.

In 2024, CUEBC will introduce a new project entitled Tangible and Intangible Heritage in Climate Change (TIHCC), with the aim of identifying sites with historical developments, listing the existing documents and artisans who could be called upon to repair canals, walls, etc. CUEBC hopes to also produce a manual for the local decision makers etc. [Link to presentation](#)

European Centre on Urban Risks (CERU), Portugal.

M. Ribeiro presented CERU's 2023 activities. The population involvement on risk management and mitigation (POPIRIM) aimed to test public participation in governance and DRR in communities that present susceptibilities to different risks. It was carried out in collaboration with ECFF (Greece) and CUEBC (Italy). The making cities resilient project aims to test public participation in governance and disaster risk. It focused on a peripheral area in the Encosta da Luz neighbourhood of Odivelas in Lisbon. Surveys and interviews were conducted to gauge the main risks perceived, with a 50% participation rate. Lessons learnt, included understanding what the local population considered to be safety or social vulnerabilities, in order to modify these conditions.

In 2024, CERU will participate in the “First national conference of public politics for civil protection”. It will also develop a project on tsunami readiness in the municipalities of Lagos and Cascais. [Link to presentation](#)

Euro-Méditerrananean Centre for the Evaluation and Prevention of Seismic Risk (CEPRIS), Morocco

N. Jabour shared the results of CEPRIS’s 2023 activities and the recent catastrophic magnitude 7 earthquake in Al Haouz, Morocco in September. Prior to this event, the Moroccan Seismic Network had been recording seismic activity between January 2021 and March 2022. The dams located 30 kilometers from the earthquake epicentre remained undamaged and showed no fragility. Nonetheless, structural damage was recorded, with landslides and rock fall occurrences. [Link to presentation](#)

European Centre for Buildings Rehabilitation (ECBR), Romania

E-S. Georgescu summarised ECBR’s 2023 activities. The project focused on reducing seismic risks related to penitentiaries through online training as part of the national strategy for seismic risk reduction. Online seminars were also held for centres and facilities holding migrants, asylum seekers and refugees and their staff. ECBR collaborated with ECPFE and participated in webinars on “Education for earthquake preparedness and on the “Seismicity of Greece” organised by the Earthquake Planning and Protection Organization of Greece (EPPO).

In 2024, ECBR’s project will focus on creating digital knowledge content and social media tools – “DIGIRISX” for DRR in the seismic zones of Romania. ECBR will also continue to collaborate with ECPFE and BeSafeNet as part of actions to disseminate risk culture to communities and people with special vulnerabilities. [Link to presentation](#)

Following the presentations by the directors of the specialised centres, D. Reynolds gave a brief update about the new centre in Bratislava. The Specialised Centre for Technological Hazards (SCenT) will become fully functional in January 2024. It will seek new partnerships and ways in which to collaborate. D. Reynolds looked forward to increasing interaction with the network stating her readiness to share some ideas with the other centres.

K. Zyman expressed his satisfaction at the outcome of the meeting.

12. OTHER OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN 2023

No further updates were given on other operational activities.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other issues were raised.

14. DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed to host the next meeting on 16 May 2024.

A. Micallef suggested holding the joint meetings in a member state in order to meet the

government officials who could then see firsthand the work done by the Agreement. K. Zyman shared this opinion, provided the budget would allow for this.